



(U) InSIDer's View of History: In SHAPE, In France

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(U) When I first joined the Army over forty years ago, I was issued two pair of brown boots and two cans of black leather dye. I was then ordered by my Platoon Sergeant (Drill Sergeants were yet to be invented) to make'em shine. This was during the Cuban Missile Crisis and near the end of basic training we were informed that we would all be grabbing our M1 rifles and heading off for Cuba.

(U) Instead, I hopped on a bus and traveled to the Brooklyn Naval Yards where I caught a ship, the USS Darby, and sailed off to France, by way of Dover, England where we picked up a pilot to get through the Channel and then sailed on to Bremerhaven, FRG. As we debated (it's kind of like deplaning from a boat), we were welcomed by a German oompah band and a crowd of well-wishers.

(U) This was quite a contrast to the indifference that met us upon arriving by train in France. The attitude of the German people was positive and they were always friendly towards Americans in general, and soldiers in particular. The French still looked upon us as invaders or occupiers and worked diligently to remove us from their soil, which they accomplished in 1966, the year after I left.

(U) My first duty station was Dreux, France, which was on an Air Force Base without any airplanes and only one Army company. There was an old soldier in my platoon, (he was a highly decorated private E2 who had a bit of difficulty hanging on to his stripes) who had served with Audie Murphy during World War II. The only thing that I remember about his stories was that he said that everyone avoided Audie because he was prone to draw enemy fire wherever he went. I guess there is a lot of truth about not sharing a foxhole with anyone braver than you are.

(U) I was then assigned to SHAPE** HQ in Paris where I worked in an underground NATO communications center. I was standing in formation when the then new Canadian maple leaf flag was first introduced and raised at NATO HQs. This is where I was when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. I was in the Club at the time and after they made that tragic announcement, they closed up there were a lot of tears and sadness.

(U) Years later I met his brother Bobby Kennedy, just a few days before he was shot and killed as well. It was at a business meeting in Indiana as he was campaigning for the Presidency; he shook hands with all of us and asked where we were from. That very weekend when I returned home to Los Angeles, he was shot in the kitchen of the Roosevelt Hotel, not ten miles from where I was living.

(U) Charles de Gaulle was the President of France during this time and you could always tell whenever he was on the move. City



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streets and the autoroute would be closed down and the military and the gendarmes would be at every intersection and overpass with automatic weapons at-the-ready. This was also during the end of the Algerian war and there were often open gun battles on the streets of Paris between the gendarmes and Algerians. There were many times that we were restricted to base and the city put off-limits.

(U) My last view of history was meeting the last surviving five star general, Omar Bradley, when he attended a division celebration for the 82d Airborne, where I was assigned. Another distinguished member in my battalion was the S3, MAJ Richard Quirk, who would later gain prominence as a fellow employee of NSA.

(U) **SHAPE = Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers Europe (NATO's military headquarters). SHAPE relocated from Paris to a site near Mons, Belgium, where it remains to this day.

(U) Note from SIGINT Communications: if you missed it, have a look at the [previous InSIDer's View of History](#) from [REDACTED]. Also, please send us YOUR story!... see our [call for submissions](#) for details.

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